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**The "Liber Aristotilis" of Hugo of Santalla. Hugo of Santalla, Charles Burnett, David Pingree
Nauta, Lodi**

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Review

Reviewed Work(s): The "Liber Aristotilis" of Hugo of Santalla by Hugo of Santalla, Charles Burnett and David Pingree

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by relating the numbers of discrete elements of composition, variously keying to each other numbers of letters, syllables, words, lines, sentences, and chapters. . . . We see the ratios of cosmic and musical theory by which the authors supposed God had created the universe—symmetry, duple ratio, extreme and mean ratio, sesquialter or hemiolus, sesquitercian or epitritus, sesquiocave epogdous, and division by one-ninth and eight-ninths—in every text considered in this book” (p. 164). Nowhere have I been able to find definitions of these technical terms or evidence that authors thought that musical theory belonged in their writings. On the contrary, many points stated as fact, like the date of the battle of Mount Badon, are inferred from the analyses Howlett undertakes. Finally, the way Howlett describes his mathematical operations grossly exaggerates their relevance, as if wolves and wind are the same because they both howl.

Let me conclude by citing this book’s real danger: readers adopting Howlett’s methodology might draw unsubstantiated conclusions about literature. For example, Howlett’s preface (outlining his studies in compositional numerology) falls seven pages from the beginning of the book (not counting flyleaves) and corresponds exactly to page 163, seven pages from the end of the book (not counting flyleaves). There Howlett cites an anecdote by Gerald of Wales: “On one occasion [Gerald] relates a story about a man who could see spirits, a story he may be suspected of having embroidered, if he didn’t fabricate it from whole cloth.” One might be tempted to make an inference from this textual architecture, but the phenomenon is purely coincidental in my view.

SCOTT GWARA, University of South Carolina

HUGO OF SANTALLA, *The “Liber Aristotilis” of Hugo of Santalla*, ed. Charles Burnett and David Pingree. (Warburg Institute Surveys and Texts, 26.) London: Warburg Institute, 1997. Paper. Pp. vi, 299; black-and-white frontispiece, 1 black-and-white figure, and tables. £28.

While astrology is now a popular game for the masses, despised by intellectuals, in the twelfth century the situation was vastly different. Early translators from the Arabic such as Hermann of Carinthia and Hugo of Santalla, active in the 1140s, doubted whether they should commit the “intimate treasures of the Arabs (*intimi Arabum thesauri*)” into the hands of the great public. These texts were sometimes kept in “the more secret depths (*inter secretiora bibliothecae penetralia*)” of the library; witness Hugo’s preface to one of his translations of astrological and astronomical texts. But Arabic science was much in demand, and, especially after the Christian reconquest, a great number of texts were translated and found their way to western Europe. Petrus Alfonsi urged his students in France to learn from the Arabs and to forget about such obsolete texts as Macrobius’s *In somnium Scipionis*.

One of the earliest translators of astrological, astronomical, and divinatory texts from the Arabic was Hugo of Santalla from Spain. His translations were dedicated to Michael, bishop of Tarazona, who was himself much interested in Arabic science. Michael and Hugo found their texts at Rota (now Rueda Jalón, between Tarazona and Zaragoza), the capital of the kingdom of the Banū Hūd from 1110 until 1140, when it was ceded to Alfonso VII of Castile. The library of the Banū Hūd, who were known for their patronage of learning, must have been rich in astronomical and mathematical texts, and Michael himself, as Hugo tells us in a preface to his translation of the Ibn al-Muthannā revision of al-Khwārizmī astronomical tables, had searched for manuscripts there. Apart from this translation (which was meant to help Michael understand the new tables), Hugo translated at least six other astrological-astronomical texts (among them works by Māshā’allāh and al-Kindī), three

on divination, and the important *De secretis nature* by Pseudo-Apollonius, a hermetic text including the earliest known Latin version of the Emerald Tablet.

This edition makes available the *Liber Aristotilis*, that is, “The Book of Aristotle Containing the Totality of All Questions, Both Genethliological and Revolutionary, (Drawn) from the 255 Volumes of the Indians,” translated in 1141. Only two manuscripts have survived, of which one is directly copied from the other. It has, of course, nothing to do with Aristotle. It discusses several astronomical concepts such as planetary latitudes, stations, heliacal risings, and oblique ascensions (book 1), astrological terms and other concepts (book 2), the twelve astrological places (book 3), and horoscopy of the sort that is found in, for example, Abū Ma’shar (book 4). The prologue contains an interesting bibliography (based on a work by Māshā’allāh) in which 125 books on astrology by twelve authorities are listed, but the editors show this list to be irrelevant to the real sources of the *Liber Aristotilis*. Which sources were used or could have been used by Hugo is set out in masterly way in the commentary (mainly the work of Pingree): the most important ones are Hermes, Ptolemy, Dorotheus of Sidon, Vettius Valens, Antiochus, Māshā’allāh, and Rhetorius. Sometimes their works are known to us only through intermediaries or in Pahlavi or Byzantine versions. In the face of so many lines of textual transmissions, one will excuse Hugo when the editors occasionally have to write, “This is not only obscure, but also confused.” One will certainly excuse those nonspecialist readers who at times find things difficult to understand, for like Hugo in the twelfth century, Pingree and Burnett have written for the elite, not for the masses. There is no English translation (understandably so, given the panoply of Latinized Arabic terms), and the commentary is at places condensed. For the student of the history of medieval astrology and astronomy, however, this invaluable and extremely erudite book has much to offer, and for those who still believe in astrology perhaps even more.

LODI NAUTA, University of Groningen

M. S. KEMPSHALL, *The Common Good in Late Medieval Political Thought: Moral Goodness and Political Benefit*. Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999. Pp. x, 401; black-and-white figures. \$95.

A more exact title would be “The Composition of Augustinian and Aristotelian Ideas of the Common Good in the Philosophical and Theological Works of Albertus Magnus, Thomas Aquinas, Giles of Rome, Henry of Ghent, Godfrey of Fontaines, James of Viterbo, John of Paris, and Remigio dei Girolami.” Working chiefly in the second half of the thirteenth century, these men had to assimilate the political thought of Aristotle’s newly translated *Politics* and *Nicomachean Ethics*, which imagined the good polity as one promoting virtue, to the Christian tradition of “political Augustinianism,” which treated the good aimed at by government, not as the perfection of people in virtue, but rather as the this-worldly utility of keeping order. Corollarily (p. 24): “Classifying the goal of political society as *bonum commune* meant analysing the connection between goodness in the human community and goodness in the universe; classifying the goal of political society as *communis utilitas* meant analysing the connection between material advantage and moral goodness.”

These and related sets of distinctions are the parameters of Kempshall’s study, whose form is not a driving argument moving in a rhetoric of contradictory alternatives, but rather a relaxed, leisurely consideration of one author after another, treatise by treatise, chapter by chapter, following all the velleities of their endless play of distinctions in minutiously ramifying clusters of abstractions flowing evenly like toothpaste from a tube. I found it hard to keep everything in mind at all times and flatter myself that others will too. More to the point, readers who are also historians, interested more in understanding ideas as